

An aerial photograph of a mountain landscape. The mountain's surface is a mix of dark green coniferous forests and lighter green deciduous trees. A prominent, jagged, and rocky peak is visible in the upper left quadrant, partially covered by snow or light-colored rock. The overall scene is a dense, textured view of a natural environment.

The Monadnock

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Clark University Geographical Society



Photo courtesy of GSG

Dear Alumni and Friends of the Graduate School of Geography (GSG):

One of the central tenets of nature-society geography is the while the drought may be natural, the famine is social. The point being that disasters, natural and otherwise, move through complicated, heterogenous, and usually highly unequal social structures, revealing both fault lines and inequities, and the choices societies make in response to stresses. In the current era, we have to question the environment-society dualism underlying that classic formulation (these days, the drought itself may well be the product of anthropogenic climate change) but there is no question that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and reinforced the tremendous inequalities and injustices in contemporary society, at scales from the local to the global. The past year has required us all to navigate our ways through a global pandemic caused by a novel virus, an existential and ongoing assault on the core institutions of our democratic government, and a growing reckoning with systemic racial injustice in our society.

In certain respects, these challenges have been particularly acute for students in our doctoral program, most of whom have neither the economic security enjoyed by tenure-track faculty, nor the option of moving back home available to at least many undergraduates. Most institutional responses to the pandemic – extending tenure clocks, ensuring that classes are available online, and so on – have focused on the two latter groups, and have not always considered the particular positions of doctoral students, who are on the one hand typically financially independent adults deeply immersed in often fieldwork-dependent research, yet on the other hand full-time students with limited time and resources to make progress through a degree program. The challenges of continuing to make progress as a doctoral student through the pandemic have been many. Fieldwork has been all but impossible, requiring some students to drop everything partway through their fieldwork and return home, others to postpone planned and funded research, and still others to redesign their analyses to center on other data and methods. International students have faced difficult choices about whether to return home for family or other reasons, and uncertainty about when and whether they will be allowed to return to Clark if they leave. They have also for the most part been ineligible for the stimulus checks many of us have received, and for off-campus employment. For students finishing, the academic job market has been exceptionally grim this year, as every university cut budgets and many instituted hiring freezes.

The GSG has responded to these challenges by supporting current students to the best of our ability. We have supported as many students as possible, allowed for flexibility around timelines affected by the pandemic, and worked with our students for the ways that all the members of CUGS have pulled together and contributed to enable us all to make it through this exceedingly difficult year in ways that have let us continue to achieve our individual and collective goals. Over the past year and a half, our doctoral students have continued to publish at exceptional rates, to apply for and win highly competitive new research grants, to teach highly rated classes as both TAs and instructors, and to serve on a whole host of committees central to the life and future of the department, dealing with everything from faculty searches; to curricular matters; to new diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. They have been creative in rethinking research designs while fieldwork has been impossible, sometimes learning about new data sources and analytical methods in the process. They have continued to produce *The Monadnock*, no small feat this spring. And most of all, they have

What is astonishing, and what I want to recognize in closing, is how remarkably productive and supportive CUGS – and the rest of the GSG – has been throughout this extremely challenging year. I am humbled by and deeply grateful for the ways that all the members of CUGS have pulled together and contributed to enable us all to make it through this exceedingly difficult year in ways that have let us continue to achieve our individual and collective goals. Over the past year and a half, our doctoral students have continued to publish at exceptional rates, to apply for and win highly competitive new research grants, to teach highly rated classes as both TAs and instructors, and to serve on a whole host of committees central to the life and future of the department, dealing with everything from faculty searches; to curricular matters; to new diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. They have been creative in rethinking research designs while fieldwork has been impossible, sometimes learning about new data sources and analytical methods in the process. They have continued to produce *The Monadnock*, no small feat this spring. And most of all, they have

continued to be the tight-knit, warmly supportive, and intellectually stimulating community that is such a central part of making Clark's Graduate School of Geography the extraordinary place it is. All of this is all the more remarkable given that, for the most part, we have not been able to see each other in person this year. The fact that CUGS has maintained and sustained such a strong sense of community through this past year is further proof of what an exceptional group it is.

For all of this, I thank them, and I look forward to better days ahead. The challenges of this year notwithstanding, I believe that the future is bright: next year we will have joining us another exciting cohort of new students; a new tenure-track faculty member, Abby Frazier, specializing in climatology; and two new staff members, Aidan Giasson and Yaa Poku, both Clark alumnae themselves.

James McCarthy

Leo L. and Joan Kraft Laskoff Professor of Economics, Technology and Environment
Director, Graduate School of Geography

A Word from the Editors

Dear CUGS—past, present, and future—

In preparing this installment of *The Monadnock*, we have been struck by the unprecedented disruptions at the GSG precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As early as its inaugural issue in 1927—and continuing through the Great Depression, the Second World War, Stagflation, and more—*The Monadnock* has chronicled the ongoing domestic and international undertakings of GSG faculty, students, and alumni. The onset of the pandemic in March 2020 changed everything: in-person course meetings, advising, exams, proposal and dissertation defenses, research, and conferences all slammed to a halt almost overnight, forced either to move online or hit pause indefinitely.

The effects of these changes have not been uniformly felt across the GSG. For some, progress to degree, tenure, or promotion has slowed or stopped as we deal with various combinations of financial insecurity, physical and mental illness, personal and family tragedies, and travel and IRB restrictions, all of which have necessitated rethinking research methodologies and timelines. We've also reconsidered research questions, priorities, and trajectories as we re-evaluate what is possible, what is urgent, and what is appropriate. Yet for others, access to courses and faculty at institutions around the world that would not have been available to us but for these unusual times have meant new opportunities to connect and (re)think about our research. Still others among us, whose fieldwork was completed before in-person restrictions began or whose methods lend themselves well to remote work, have been exceptionally productive as distractions and commutes have been reduced.

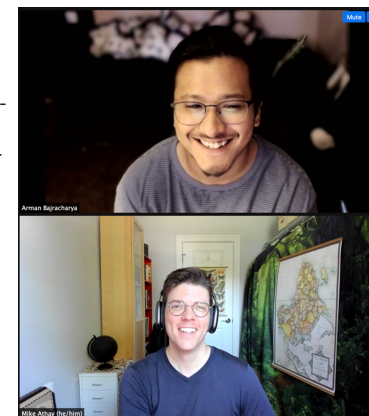
In these pages, we have tried to capture something of the spirit of these unprecedented times at the GSG. We feature edited transcripts of group interviews, conducted via video conference, with members of three current Ph.D. student cohorts. We have also included profiles of a retiring staff member (Beth Nugent) and a new visiting assistant professor (Joseph Getzoff), as well as reflections from a graduating Ph.D. student (Mara van den Bold). We also feature screenshots from Zoom calls (a hallmark of the last year and a half) and photos from the fieldwork that has continued and from recent, post-vaccination social events. Where space permitted, we also included photos (courtesy of CUGS) from CUGS' annual Mount Monadnock hike in August 2020 throughout the entire issue.

While we still aren't sure what "normal" looks like in the COVID-19 era, we're looking forward to seeing many of you as we resume in-person GSG activities this fall.

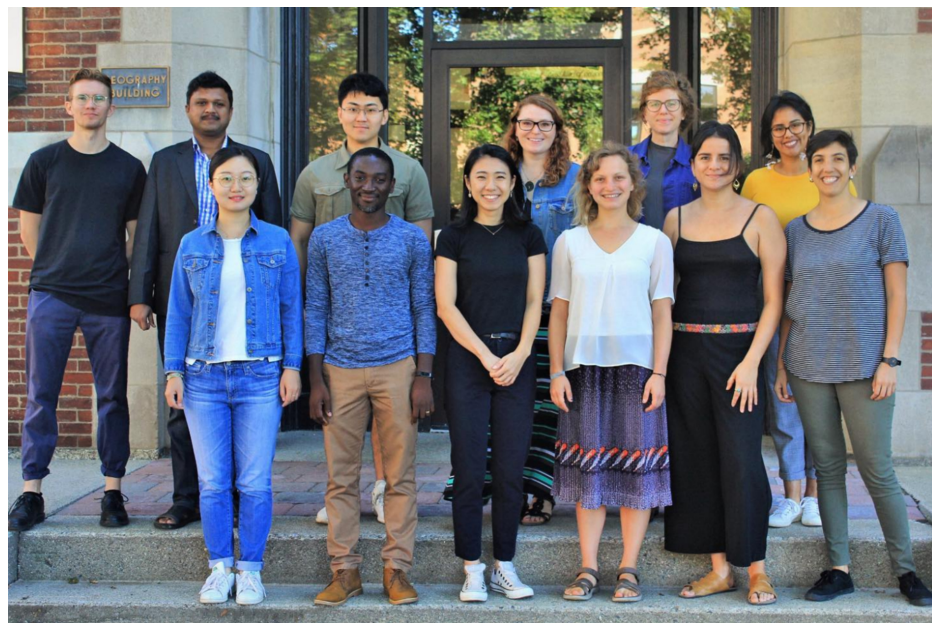
Wishing you the best in these difficult times, and looking forward to brighter times ahead,

Arman Bajracharya and Mike Athay

Ph.D. Students, Graduate School of Geography | Editors, *The Monadnock Magazine*



Above: *Monadnock* co-editors Arman Bajracharya and Mike Athay in their natural habitat. Photo courtesy of Mike Athay.



Above: New Ph.D. Students, Fall 2019, (back row, L-R) William Cruise, Hillol Dutta, Sitian Xiong, Ashley Hoffman, Emily Holloway, Andrea Cabrera Roa (front row, L-R) Li Xi, Thomas Bilintoh, Haruka Nagano, Julia Wagner, María José Guillén Araya, Pilar Delpino Marimon. Photo courtesy of GSG.

The Monadnock: What three words describe the difference between on campus and remote grad school?

Majo Guillén Araya: I have two: 'back pain.'

Julia Wagner: 'Headaches.' And also: 'quiet.' It's been so quiet on campus and around town.

Ashley Hoffman: I would say: 'isolating.'

JW: I'll also say 'creative' because we need a positive one. There's been creative things we've done to counteract the limitations.

M: What is a memorable experience of your time as a member of CUGS thus far?

JW: I really enjoyed our road trip down to DOPE [the Dimensions of Political Ecology conference] right at the beginning of the pandemic last year. It was right before everything closed up, and too many of us packed into a minivan and drove for fifteen hours to Kentucky. We didn't know it at the time, but it was the last hurrah before total isolation for a long time. So, it was a good memory. It was silly and fun, a little adventure with CUGS.

MG: Yeah. I agree. The fact that we also stayed in a house where everything was horses: the windows, the curtains, the floors, the plates, the

spoons. But yeah, it was before everything got scary and isolating. It was also very fun. And also, we were learning and also away from Worcester, and it was a trip. So, it was fun.

Li Xi: The Mount Monadnock hike gave me the sense that I blended into CUGS, and that feeling is precious. I feel bad for the first-year Ph.D. students here because I don't think they have this experience. I hope they can get it after the pandemic.

MG: I also liked my birthday, that it was Halloween. And we had a party.

AH: This isn't a single experience, but I liked the first semester. All of us being up in the Mezz. It was nice to casually see each other every day. And that's not something you get anymore. I thought it was always fun to run into people and share ideas.

M: What are your research interests, and how has the COVID-19 pandemic shaped or reshaped them?

JW: I'm studying data economies and urban infrastructures—investment and construction and use—and COVID killed my first case study. It was canceled due to the unprecedented economic instability caused by the pandemic.

So, I've had to reorient what I'm looking at, which is still undefined. But I feel lucky to have spent this year in coursework.

MG: It hasn't changed in my case, but it's because I'm waiting for the pandemic to be over. We're still taking courses. And then comes the craziness of orals. I'm hoping we can do actual fieldwork, but I'm in denial.

AH: I study forest ecology. So, pandemics and outbreaks of humans don't impact that much. But it has influenced my trajectory. I was hoping to get into the field last year, and the pandemic made everything crazy. Fortunately, I am going out to start collecting preliminary data this summer. And it's going to look different than it would in normal situations. We're going to be strictly isolated, and there are rules we'll have to follow. So, it's reshaping the protocols in the field, but it's not changing the research or the research interests, which is looking at fires and tree regeneration. Human pandemics don't impact that.

LX: And for me, it didn't change much because originally there was a lot of computer work. You could consider that as a lucky part because it's not going to be influenced much by COVID. But it will influence the chances of doing fieldwork. There's already a low chance; I'll consider that after the pandemic.

M: What are you looking forward to, and what do you hope to achieve, next year?

JW: I'm looking forward to a Conceptual Potluck, and to being able to get together. Our Conceptual Potluck was canceled—the one from my first year—because it would have been April or May last year. I'm excited for that, and getting together with CUGS, and hanging out. That will be super nice.

AH: I'm looking forward to seeing everyone's faces again in real life, not on screens. I'm excited to not stare at a screen. And I'm also excited about all of the fun milestones we have to go through next year, like taking our orals and getting our research proposals in. It's going to be a lot, but hopefully it'll be in the office where we can see each other.

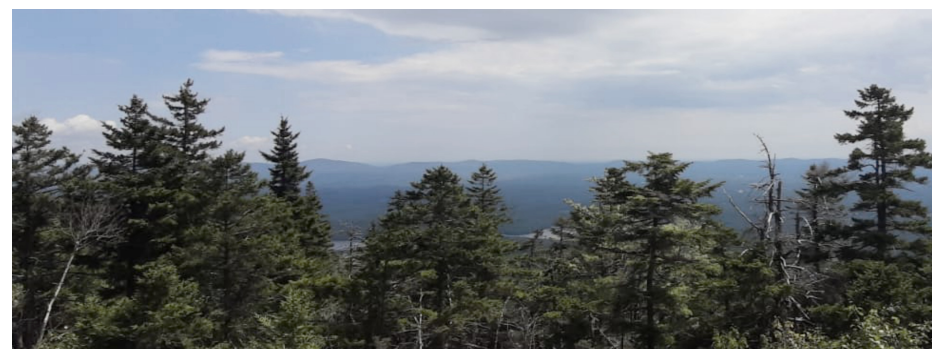
MG: Yes, I'm looking forward to being in person. That's what I'm looking forward to, with people around. Yeah, I'm going through milestones also, and I have always imagined having that in front of people, not in front of the screen. I'm also looking forward to seeing people in the room. It's that simple. Yeah, me too.

LX: Looking forward to those. And also, personally, I want to go to Hawaii or Yellowstone, like a big trip. A shorter trip can't satisfy me. I want big trips. Same to you guys, because if you go somewhere further, you will feel life is refreshing, like your soul is purified. It's worth it. And yeah, of course: I want my academic goals to be fulfilled as well.

M: Any closing thoughts you'd like CUGS past, present, and future to hear from this year's second-year cohort?

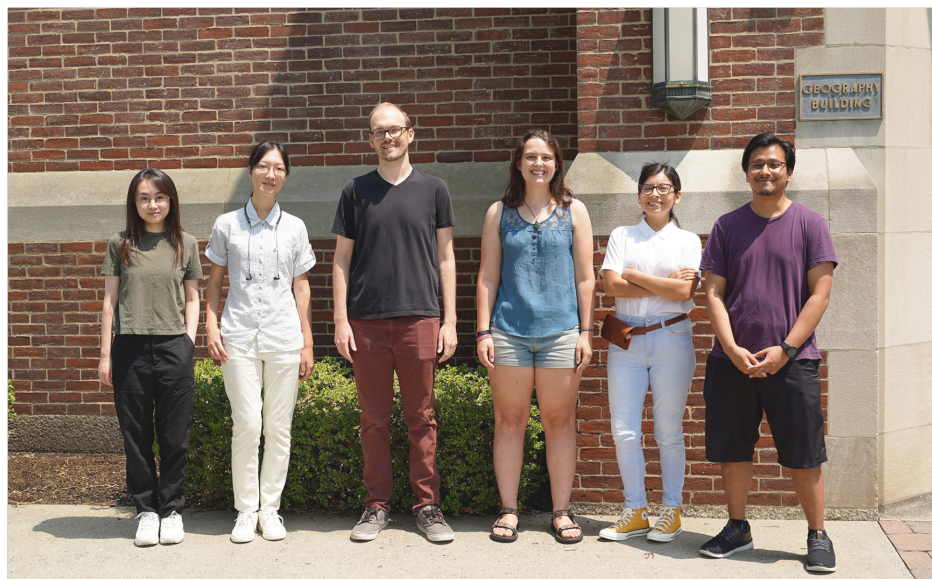
MG: Yes: be kind to yourself. It sounds cliché, but it's important because sometimes we judge ourselves too hard, especially in a Ph.D. program when so much is expected from you, and you are doing your best, and you feel it's not enough. So, yeah, rest and be kind to yourself, and resting is part of being kind to yourself. I'm also saying this to myself.

JW: And be kind to each other. Because this year has been so much better with our CUGS community, even if we are separated.



Above (and un-captioned throughout the rest of the issue): Scenes from CUGS' annual Mount Monadnock hike, summer 2020. Photos courtesy of CUGS.

Meet CUGS 2020



Above: New Ph.D. Students, Fall 2020, (L-R) Shiqi Tao, Aiying Zhang, Patrick Geiger, Maddy Kroot, Gisselle Vila-Benites, Arman Bajracharya. Photo courtesy of Mike Athay and the GSG.

M: Welcome to Clark, the GSG, and CUGS. Even if it has been mostly online, what are your impressions?

Gisselle Vila-Benites: My experience started while I was in Peru, so I was not only online but also in another country. But everyone made the process of becoming a Clarkie engageable and amenable. So, I really appreciate that. But yes, some difficulties can't be overcome online.

Maddy Kroot: I'm still in New Hampshire, but I've been really impressed by—even though all my interactions with Clark have been over Zoom—how well I've gotten to know people, especially elder CUGS who've made a point of mentoring. I'm excited to meet in person to confirm everyone is not just a talking head.

Shiqi Tao: My experience is good as well. I enjoy being online because you have more time to work, and you don't need to worry about commuting. It works well for me.

Arman Bajracharya: I am amenable to this hybrid option, staying home one day and then going to the campus. I was lucky to get to Worcester on time. Working from home, the previous idea was that that's not possible. Now it is. And the same thing with starting from home, it's not equally motivating, but it's good to have experienced at some point. But getting

inside the Mezz once a month—it's not three or four times a week, which I guess was the norm before COVID happened—it's certainly something.

Aiying Zhang: Pursuing graduate studies far away from my home, studying and working mostly online, and being a fresh doctoral student are all brand-new experiences for me. It's exciting, challenging, and fulfilling. But I appreciate the busy aspects, because you spend almost all your energy on these tasks, and you don't get to think about everything else. Strangely, being so busy this semester is helping me to adapt. And everyone I've met here—the faculty, our cohort—has been so warm and welcoming, and I appreciate that our department has built this sense of community.

Patrick Geiger: Everyone at the GSG has been kind and welcoming, and I'm constantly impressed with the breadth and depth of knowledge of my classmates. I also really appreciate how integrated CUGS is with the department. Getting to interact with faculty and other grad students outside the classroom—in committee meetings, brownbags, and so on—has helped introduce me to people who I otherwise might not have met.

M: What has your cohort done to socialize and

build camaraderie during the pandemic?

PG: Honestly, not much. But hopefully we can meet up in person soon!

MK: I'll make the obvious joke: mostly by failing as a social committee.

ST: I think we are trying. But it failed obviously. [Laughs.] I think everyone now is worried about the chance they could pass COVID to other people. But I see more and more people getting the COVID vaccine. I think the situation will get better, and then we'll finally meet.

GV: I'm looking forward to Field Camp, because we didn't have a proper welcome by the previous cohorts. I think that would be a very good starting point to socializing, and also do the same with the upcoming cohort. I think it's the tradition.

AZ: It's hard to socialize online. Interacting in person comes naturally. I think Zoom does have some merits: it's more convenient, and you can have several meetings a day without ever having to work out of your room. We did have a nice chat on Halloween, and I hope we can do something like that again. I look forward to camping, too. And when everything gets back to normal, hopefully we can catch up in person.

AB: The most social thing we've done is Tony's [colloquium series] class. And I think that's it, except for except for our Zoom social on Halloween.

M: Outside of school and research, what do you like to do for fun?

ST: Recently, gaming and hiking. My boyfriend and I have been to the mountains. It's beautiful around Massachusetts!

MK: Yeah, I am one presidential traverse away from finishing my 4000-footers in New Hampshire. So that's my big summer project once Mt. Washington thaws out. That and chasing my cat and dog around on Zoom. I'm sure my cat will show up at some point because she really has this Shiqi. [Laughs.]

ST: Maybe I can ask my roommate's cat and they can meet. They can chat!

GV: I like jogging and drawing. This semester, I've been watching movies in an organized and curated manner to educate myself. The last cycle I made is old Asian cinema, and I've been watching Wong Kar-wai's movies.

AZ: I am a nerd. I enjoy going outdoors, but we don't really get much chance during the pandemic. I enjoy listening to music, playing

games, watching TV shows and movies, and reading, although I haven't read much since coming here.

AB: Yeah. I don't really go out much as well. I play a lot of games, and I play music.

PG: I started bird watching during the pandemic and am now completely hooked. I also enjoy board games and watching soccer.

M: What are you most looking forward to next school year?

ST: Meeting everybody. I think that's my main purpose of being in person.

MK: Moving to Worcester. Knowing people there has gotten me psyched to be in Worcester.

GV: I adhere to those feelings, precisely the same.

AZ: Can I say 'everything?' I hope everything can get back to normal in the fall. And that I can have classes in an actual classroom. And I look forward to working in my office. We each got assigned an office desk, but I only visited once at the start of the fall semester. So, I look forward to this normal work routine, to go to my office every day and interact with people. And I also look forward to going to the school cafeteria, having lunch with actual people, with friends. If everything gets back normal, we can have a second 'first-year' experience because it's going to be so different from what we're experiencing now. So, I'm basically looking forward to everything next year.

AB: Getting back onto a schedule that separates personal time from office time. Everyone's in their own offices right now, even though it's a few paces from their bedroom. But getting things sorted out—you know, a classroom full of people without masks—if not next year, then maybe sometime soon.

PG: Being in person!



Getting to Know the Visiting Faculty: Joseph F. Getzoff

The Monadnock: How would you describe your experience teaching in the GSG?

Joseph Getzoff: I've really enjoyed the opportunity to teach in GSG. This is my first full-time teaching position after I received my degree in July 2020, and it has allowed me to offer courses that I have designed myself, a fun and fulfilling experience. While teaching remotely has its disadvantages, I've been really impressed with students' levels of engagement, which have helped each class meeting revolve around discussion, rather than only lectures. I've also found Clark students to be quite engaged and inspired, 'up on' everything, so I learn a lot from them. I do look forward to teaching in person once again in the fall, and it would be nice getting to know people in the department, without the need for a solid internet connection.

M: Could you briefly describe your current research?

JG: I think of myself as a "cultural geographer," which for me is one way of saying that I draw a lot of my analysis from the humanities and humanistic social sciences. My dissertation looked at historical and contemporary developmentalist narratives that shape Israeli-Jewish and Bedouin-Israeli relationships in Israel/Palestine's Negev (Hebrew) / Naqab (Arabic) region. I continue to look at how development intersects with specific environmental and economic narratives that tie into claims over land. I'm particularly interested in nature-society and political ecology approaches to arid landscapes. An article I am working on now looks at how university environmental studies in southern Israel tied into specific settler and state ideas about Bedouin land claims and agricultural expertise. Much of this research has led me to consider comparative approaches to contemporary and historical settler colonialism, so in much of my last year, I've been reading environmental and economic histories looking for ideological and material parallels between the U.S. and Israel. I am developing a book project that will further interrogate such connections, asking how settler ideas about development move between settler states. I'll be focusing on specific institutional connections, soil scientists, modernist ideas of environmental development, and the long history of the phrase, "make the desert bloom."

M: What are the most interesting developments for you in geography now?



Above: Joseph F. Getzoff, Ph.D. Photo courtesy of Joseph Getzoff.

JG: I think what I find most interesting is the confluence between different social scientific and humanistic disciplines when considering approaches to environmental or developmental history. Thanks to my training at the University of Minnesota, I tend to read interdisciplinary work. Some of the books I've enjoyed recently: Sherene Seikaly's *Men of Capital: Scarcity and Economy in Mandate Palestine*, Bathsheba Demuth's *Floating Coast*, and Diana K. Davis's *The Arid Lands: History, Power, Knowledge*. I also think there is a growing recognition of the dynamics and histories of settler colonialism in 'mainstream' human geography scholarship, and I find this kind of comparative work to be urgently important.

M: What do you do away from scholarship?

JG: In normal times, my partner and I to wander and travel. I usually prefer to be in entirely new spaces, without a schedule or clock. Our weekend usually involves some long walk through previously unexplored woods, wandering about some town or city, or, these days, strolling along a Massachusetts coastline. My partner's family is in South India, so we spend a lot of time in Hyderabad and Bangalore and tend to enjoy that shift in day-to-day life when we can travel. My family is from the Pine Barrens in South (New) Jersey, so I have spent a

lot of time not only kayaking and exploring there, but also think of myself as an amateur historian of the region (very amateur) and like to continue learning everything I can about my home (on cranberry bogs, ghost towns, etc.).

M: How have you been managing scholarship and life during this most unusual year of the pandemic?

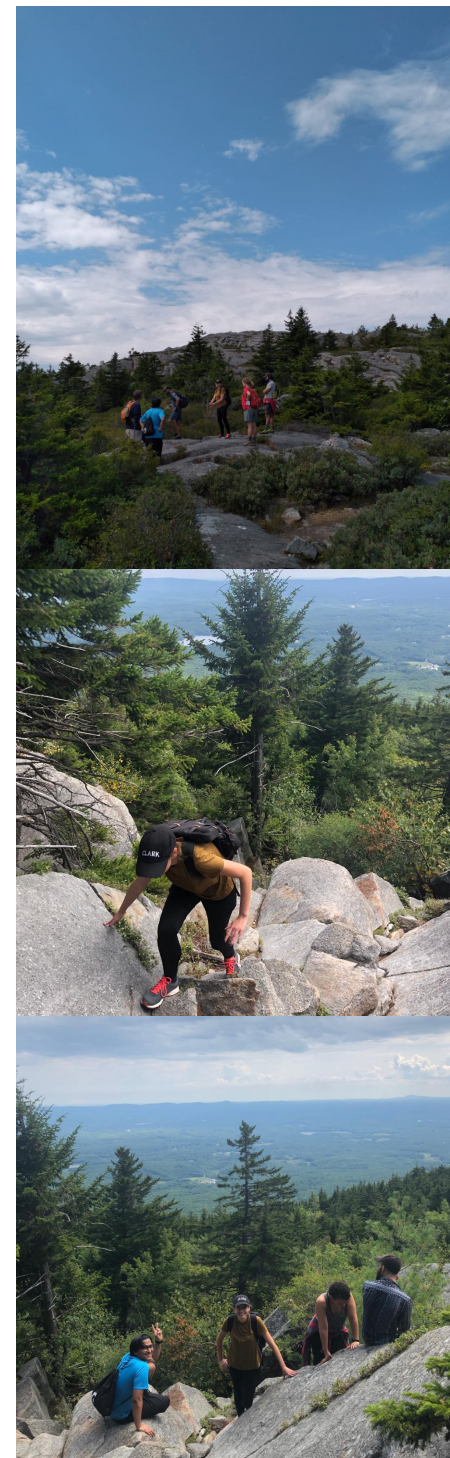
JG: Not very well! I did use some of the long winter break to begin work on the next article and project, though, with this year, everything is taking much longer than expected. I also need a strict spatial separation between work/home life, which has been challenging, to say the least. I also tend to suffer from cabin fever when there isn't a global pandemic, so my usual oases have been somewhat elusive. As a result, I've become (perhaps embarrassingly) an expert on rural English murder mystery TV series.

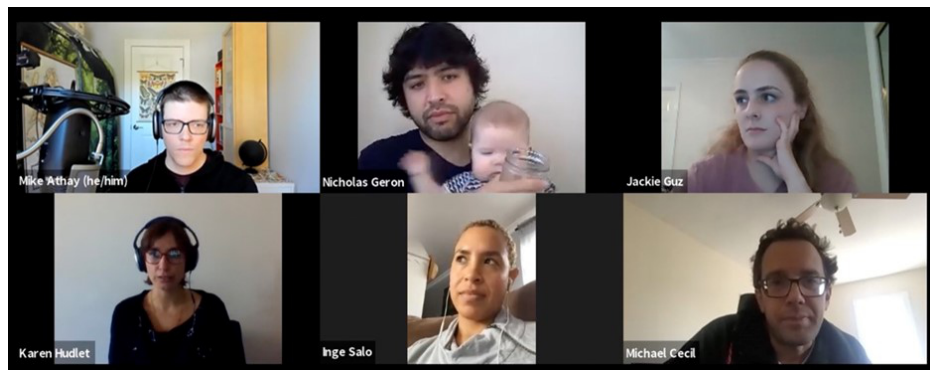
Retiring Staff: Elizabeth Nugent



Above: Elizabeth Nugent. Photo courtesy of the GSG.

Beth has worked at Clark for 24 years, starting in Telecommunications and then spending many years in COPACE before joining the Geography Department. She met her husband at Clark and all four of her children are Clark graduates. She will miss all the wonderful people at Clark but is looking forward to retirement, especially to spending time in Spain. Please join us in congratulating Beth and thanking her for her service!





Above: Members of the fourth-year cohort meet on Zoom to discuss progress towards the Ph.D. during a global pandemic. Photo courtesy of Mike Athay.

The Monadnock: CUGS often spend their fourth year in the field. How did the onset of the pandemic affect your research plans?

Nick Geron: The pandemic hasn't affected my research much because I've collected data during the summer through the HERO [Human Environment Regional Observatory] program. But it affected my milestones—I've pushed those back. It's been harder to get the committee together. And then there's the community that was on the physical geography side, when you're up late at night at midnight trying to get an R script to run or trying to understand how you're going to select your final model and not having anyone to talk to you about that. My external was always like, 'Don't you have a stats person to talk to?' And I'm like, 'I don't right now because I'm in my cubicle at home, you know, isolated.' So there are research challenges that are hard to pin down.

Jackie Guz: My fieldwork got canceled for a second year in a row. I had undergrads who were going to come with me and master's students. The budget and the plans had been made and I wasn't allowed to take anyone because they're asking questions like, 'Is it safe? Will they be going to the bathroom six feet apart?' And I wanted to respond with, like, 'God, I hope so, because you're in the woods, walking, like, dig a hole.' It was definitely socially distanced, but it got completely canceled. And so my project got completely changed—I ended up not doing anything I had planned. I had to join last minute on someone else's dissertation fieldwork to get the experience.

Inge Salo: Similar to Nick, before the pandemic

hit, I thought I could do two milestones in one semester, but that was very ambitious. So I needed to focus on doing my exams and then do my proposal, which I'm still busy with because I had to travel. I came home to do fieldwork. So I had to relocate across continents in the middle of a pandemic. There were lots of travel bans I had to pay attention to. I had to find the perfect time to move when the numbers were low. That was tricky to navigate. So I'm doing what I am doing, one of my milestones, and in the fourth-year fieldwork space, I'm doing that concurrently. So time feels weird, to define the fourth year as your fieldwork year. I don't know if that can exist anymore, be a thing anymore. So yeah, that's been challenging. And also fieldwork for me is being back home. So that means relocating back home and being with family again. It's a lot like everybody, like Nick had a baby during a pandemic and had to juggle all these things. So, even living life has been difficult or challenging. And so to think of moving along in a timely manner with the program is also difficult to navigate.

Karen Hudlet: The pandemic hit when I was going through orals and proposal. And I think at the beginning I didn't realize because it gave me so much time and space—because we couldn't go out—to read and finish orals and do my proposal and defend it. The first time I realized it was going to impact me and my research was when my committee said that to finish and be ABD, I needed to write an addendum, which was 'What are you going to do with your research during COVID?' At that point, I thought this pandemic was going to end in six months. So this was an addendum, but I didn't realize my

methods would be so drastically affected and that the possibilities of doing qualitative methods like ethnography, participant observation, or in-person interviews were not going to be available anymore. So it has been such a weird year in which time is frozen. And in some ways, I have been doing virtual ethnography through forums and so on. I am also like Inge, I go home and my fieldwork is in my country. I work closely with NGOs, and in these NGOs, half of the people have gotten COVID, and trying to deal with those on the ground getting COVID all the time—it's a risk for everyone. It's different from the bubble that happens when I'm at Clark being tested every three days, looking at other Ph.D. students, it's a completely different reality. It's a different world. And now that vaccines are coming to the U.S.—for many of us who don't do fieldwork in the U.S., I don't think conditions on the ground are going to change a lot like they will in the U.S., where the expectation is everyone will get a vaccine. And so it's always these weird spaces, and temporalities, and realities that are clashing more and more. But I guess overall, the only positive thing has been it has allowed me to rethink what I actually am interested in. And I have spent a year not doing fieldwork completely, but mostly reading about other topics.

Mike Athay: I was planning to do fieldwork in India and had started developing a proposal around that. And I also had conducted pre-dissertation fieldwork in India in the summer of 2019. And when the pandemic hit and I saw that international travel wasn't going to be possible for some time and that international research could be a challenge as well, I decided to change gears and try to come up with a somewhat analogous set of research questions for a United States context. I'm hopeful that as India continues to roll out its vaccines, that in future years, I'll still be able to conduct the fieldwork I was planning to do in India, perhaps as an additional research project or a postdoc. But I'm also hoping that I can do any fieldwork, even in the United States, which—since I want to do in-person interviews and maybe some ethnographic fieldwork—I hope that they let us talk to people in person again soon.

Mike Cecil: Yeah, I feel fortunate in that I don't feel the pandemic has affected my research as much as a lot of you. Part of that is that in remote sensing and dealing with data, inherently you don't necessarily need to talk to people. And the parts where I would have talked to people or done fieldwork, I've been able to do some of those remotely. So, I probably would

have gone to Zambia this past September or October for a month or so when they were beginning the planting of their crops and map fields, talk to workers at the Zambia Agriculture Research Institute [ZARI], talk to local farmers about their management practices, things like that. That would have required IRB as well. But we've been able to work in partnership with this organization, ZARI, that is managing some of the field trials and the installation of some of our sensors there. And you know, it's not perfect, but it's a very high percentage of the work I would have done anyway. So I'm hoping to go back this fall, assuming things are sorted out by then. But I feel lucky compared to a lot of my cohort that I'm still able to continue with some parts of my research. So I've had chats with my advisor to add that addendum to my proposal. But I would say, overall, it's manageable.

M: What pandemic-related challenges to your research have you faced this year, and how have you overcome them?

MA: I think not being able to do things in person is challenging. So rethinking methods, also not being able to meet with my committee in person, not walking around the halls of Clark. In an ideal world where there was no pandemic, when you're working on your proposal, a lot of times you're on campus and you can drop by various committee members' office hours and talk to them. So that's been a lot harder. This year there's less organic time when we're running into each other in our offices and the halls, at colloquia, and so on. So I think that's been more of a challenge: while the isolation gives you more time to work heads down on your proposal, there's also less spur-of-the-moment collaboration and inspiration that you get from talking to others.

NG: If I could say challenges as well as opportunities, my proposal defense was on Zoom over the summer, which probably wouldn't have been possible without the pandemic. It has been hard to get everyone on my committee together, and so that was helpful in opening up a summer time. Then this year, it's been easier to schedule certain types of meetings. We have the Urban ecology Reading Group, which has been really nice to meet with other CUGS members and have that academic community and as well to have a postdoc that probably wouldn't have been done in person. So in that sense, those are nice things. But the research community, especially related to processing and analyzing those decisions, I took for granted, like

the spatial proximity in EORS [graduate student office space]. That was a big appeal of coming to Clark in the first place. That's been tough.

KH: I also feel grateful because the pandemic allowed me to read de-colonial feminist thought that I would have never had the time to read if I was actually doing fieldwork. So I got to be connected with many different CUGS members, to read more with them, publish an article with them, and rethink other topics. And I wouldn't have had the time to do that if I was working and doing ethnographic work. So that has been nice. The pandemic also opened opportunities to take classes outside of Clark. I took classes in Mexico, at SUNY, and I was part of many different seminars because everything was on Zoom. And that allowed me to learn with a lot of professors that I wouldn't usually have had access to. I also got better dates for my milestones because of the pandemic and AAG conference being canceled. I think one of the challenges I'm seeing is my fieldwork was not archival. But now it is a little. And so it's learning to use methods you have not used before, such as analyzing rulings and going deeper into the documents that are already available. And that has been one of the challenges that I have to learn and rethink the methodologies.

JG: I had a lot of fieldwork planned. I do remote sensing and GIS, but a lot of my dissertation plans were tied to field data. I think there's a disconnect between physical geographers and actually gathering field data, which is a big component in ecology. So that was frustrating. I would have really loved to do that, but it benefited me because I wouldn't have been able to move home for about a year. And it's time that I wouldn't have had with my family otherwise. So, that has been a silver lining.

IS: Doing a Ph.D. has always been an isolating experience. But I've really felt that during this time and even now being across the world from campus, I feel it even more. But how I've overcome that is I've made contact with my old university back home. And so I've reached out to my old supervisor and I'm in a class with her now and stuff like that. So, even though I don't need to be doing classes again, I've been staying connected to some type of like academic community. I've also had more opportunities to be a part of classes outside of Clark and attend more academic talks, which happened online. That's helped me think, and rethink, my research. Another blessing—even though I'm taking this long with my proposal—is that it's given me the space to think about what I

actually want my research to be about. And I get to make those decisions, which is cool because I'm going to be doing this project for a long time. So I get to create something that's from my brain with the help, obviously, of my committee. So the pandemic has given me more time and space to think about my research creatively as well.

MC: I miss the community and some of the informal conversations that would have happened that haven't happened. Until the pandemic hit, I went to conferences, there were always workshops or visiting students in my research, and all these different opportunities to network, meet people, talk about my research. And now we do stuff over Zoom, and that's nice. But I don't think there's the space for that kind informal conversation where you chat with someone, learn about the research, see how it connects to yours. That's what I miss the most are learning opportunities.

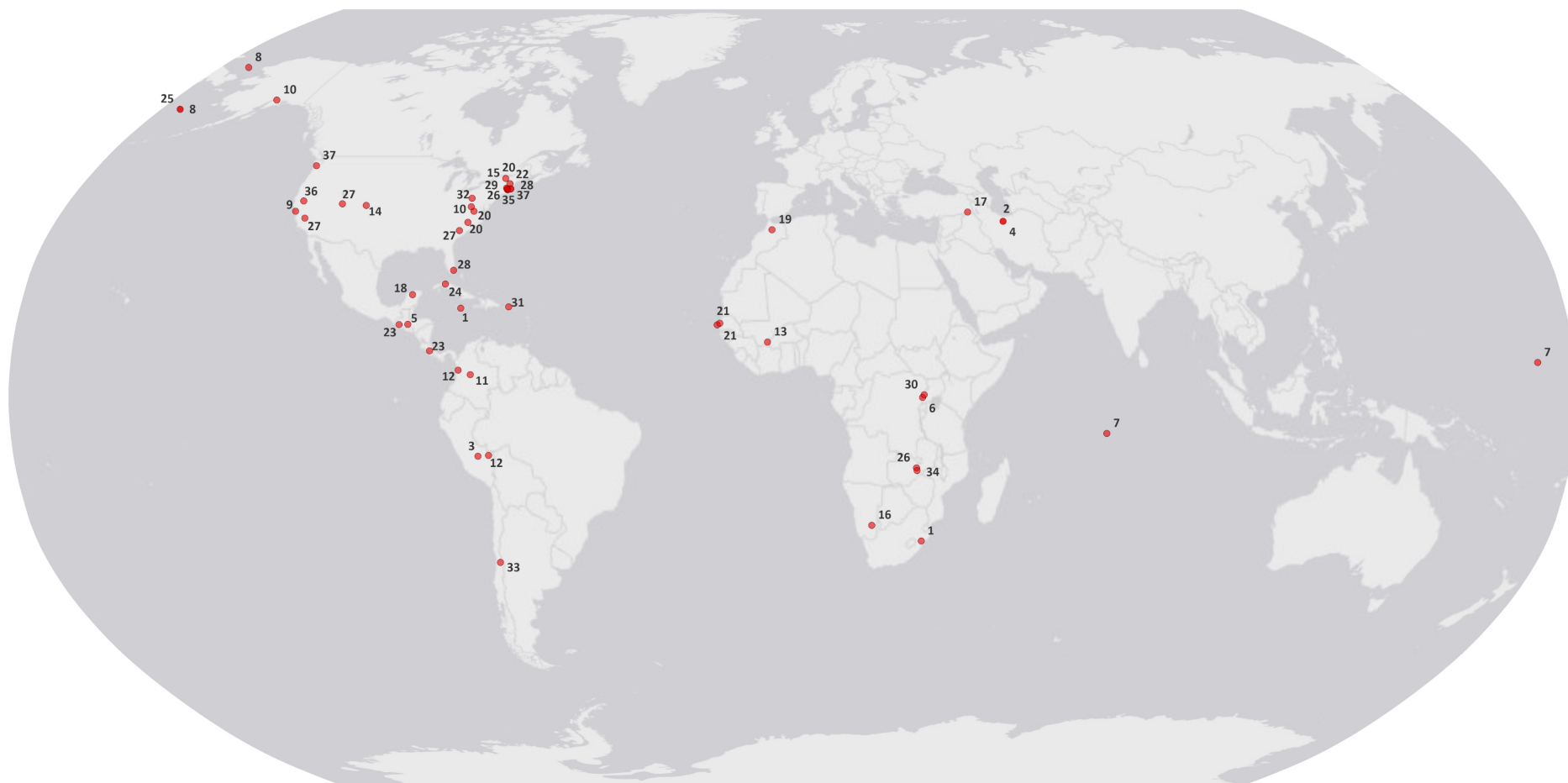
M: *Any final thoughts? Any wisdom to pass on to past, present, and future CUGS from your experience during the pandemic?*

NG: Yeah. The virtual AAG is not a good thing for early career. The lack of informal conversations, the inability to chat with people after the talks, the lack of people that you talk to or run into. It is nice to hear presentations and present work again, which was a relief after a couple years. But, yeah, I'm presenting to people who I want to get postdocs with. And I'm in this daylong session with them. And to not have that for a year and then not to be able to grab drinks after or go in depth about my future goals with them, it's a big, missed opportunity.

MA: Getting involved in creative projects has helped me get through the pandemic. One example is the Stories from the Future group that a recent CUGS alum, Dylan Harris, invited me to participate in. For six or seven months in 2020, about 30 participants from around the world met online once a month and worked on storytelling projects. We were tasked to tell stories from 2030, and many ended up focusing on ecological problems and climate change. We envisioned more positive futures and told the stories of how we got there. My project became a podcast called *Future Diaries* where two co-hosts and I feature storytellers from different futures. It's been a fun project that has also influenced my dissertation and academic plans: I want to be sure my research builds more positive futures and doesn't just describe the present or the past. It's been amazing, so I would encourage CUGS to stay creative!



Research Sites of Current Doctoral Students



1. Alex Moulton, Jamaica; KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
 2. Alireza Farahani, Tehran, Iran
 3. Andrea Cabrera Roa, Reserva Territorial Kugapori, Nahua, Nanti y Otros, Pucallpa-Cuzco, Peru
 4. Azadeh Esfahani, Tehran, Iran
 5. Benjamin Fash, Copán Ruinas, Honduras
 6. Bernadette Arakwiye, Albertine Rift Biodiversity Hotspot, East Africa
 7. Brittany Lauren Wheeler, The Marshall Islands and Diego Garcia
 8. Clare Gaffey, Bering Sea and Chukchi Sea
 9. Dan Santos, Bay Area, California, USA
 10. Dylan Harris, Anchorage, Alaska and Circleville, West Virginia, USA

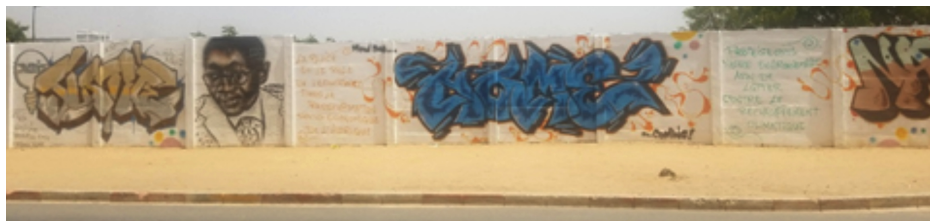
11. Elisa Arond, Bogota, Columbia
 12. Gisselle Vila-Benites, Madre de Dios, Peru and Chocó, Colombia
 13. Helen Rosko, Sikasso, Mali
 14. Jackie Guz, Colorado, USA
 15. Jacob Chamberlain, Burlington, Vermont, USA
 16. Janae Davis, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, South Africa
 17. Kaner Turker, Northern Kurdistan, Turkey
 18. Karen Hudlet Vazquez, Yucatán, Mexico
 19. Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen, Fes, Morocco
 20. Li Xi, New England, Virginia, and North Carolina, USA

21. Mara van den Bold, Dakar and Taiba n'Diaye, Senegal
 22. Marc Healy, Massachusetts, USA (multiple locations)
 23. María José Guillén Araya, Sololá, Guatemala, and Talamanca, Costa Rica
 24. Mario Machado, Matanzas, Cuba
 25. Melishia Santiago, Bering Sea
 26. Michael Cecil, Sutton, Massachusetts, USA and Zambia (multiple locations)
 27. Mike Athay, California, Utah, Massachusetts, and South Carolina, USA (multiple locations)
 28. Nathaniel Strosberg, Boston, Massachusetts and Miami Beach, Florida, USA

29. Nick Geron, Elm Park, Worcester, Massachusetts, USA
 30. Patrick Mutegeki, Kabarole District, Uganda
 31. Richard Kruger, San Juan, Puerto Rico, USA
 32. Sarah SanGiovanni, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA
 33. Scott Odell, Santiago, Chile
 34. Sitian Xiong, Zambia (multiple locations)
 35. Son Ca Lam, Dorchester, Massachusetts, USA
 36. Surendra Shrestha, Western USA
 37. Yu Zhou, Harvard Forest, Massachusetts and Pacific Northwest, USA

Based on self-reported data from CUGS in fall 2019 and summer 2021. Includes some students who have since graduated. Basemap sourced from ESRI.

Reflections about Clark – Navigating Life after the Woo



Above: Dakar is full of street art – justice, education, and climate change are represented in these murals.

Text, photos, and captions by Mara van den Bold

I'm amazed that it has been nearly five years since our cohort sat together for the first time, listening to Tony and Gil give us an overview of the GSG and the Ph.D. program. Over the next few years, I always held on to two overarching messages from that orientation: First, that there likely will be major events in our personal lives while we are at Clark, and that we will need to find a healthy balance between taking part in an intense academic program and attending to our lives outside of Jefferson. Second, that a good Ph.D. is a finished one. While I'm still working towards the second (!), it is not unrelated to the first, which has come true for many, if not all, of us. I'll reflect briefly on life over the past two years since I left the Woo and provide some thoughts for incoming students.

My research examines Senegal's recent move to renewable energy, particularly what kind of narratives are mobilized (and by whom) to justify such a move, and how this affects the rollout of utility-scale renewable energy projects

in rural communities. My fieldwork there was sandwiched between some significant life events. After finishing third year at Clark, I moved (back) to D.C. in June 2019, got married there in August 2019, and left for fieldwork in Senegal about a month later, until March 2020. As part of my job at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) (which I kept on part-time while at Clark), I had visited Senegal several times before – Dakar, its capital, is, like any big city, alive day and night, brimming with live music, art, food, and people from all over, and because it sits on the very tip of the westernmost peninsula of the continent, it is surrounded by the ocean, and therefore an incredibly unique place to be.

It took time to re-establish relationships with people there, partially because I needed to balance a totally insane schedule of French and Wolof language classes, my part-time job (which I was doing from the Senegal office), taking the HECCMA [Higher Education Consortium of Central Massachusetts] teaching course online, (still!) writing grant proposals, and actually doing my research, which involved figuring out

the politics of a new sector, setting up interviews in French with people usually way too busy to make time for a Ph.D. student (though they did, mostly; I even did an interview at the home of a former Minister), and finding and training a research assistant to help me with interviews in Wolof in several villages in a rural municipality about 60 miles outside of Dakar, where the largest wind power project in the region was being installed. I would not have been able to complete my work without my research assistant Modou – through him, I was able to learn about what communities think of such a large-scale project installed (literally) in their agricultural fields, and how the development of the project was influenced by political and financial decisions taken back in Dakar and abroad. Looking back on it now, I don't know how I managed to juggle everything, although my follow up work planned for the fall never happened.

In February 2020, Covid arrived in Senegal by way of a passenger off a plane from France. I remember sitting in a neighborhood cafe one evening in late February and overhearing someone talking about lunch with the person in question the week before – I left that café, but was entirely oblivious to the extent to which Covid would rule our lives the rest of the year and into 2021. I had a flight to the U.S. booked for March 12. The day after I arrived back in D.C., Friday March 13, was the last day in the office for most people in D.C. for many months to come. One week later, the Senegal airport shut down to international travel until late summer. I had hoped to do follow up research in Senegal that fall, but of course the pandemic made that very difficult. Life itself (literally) also intervened – my partner and I had a baby in December 2020 (!), so I decided to take an extra

semester (or two) to finish up the Ph.D. because apparently taking care of a baby, a part-time job, and a Ph.D. do not fit into a work week.

Looking back on the past five years, and especially the last two, the following are a few reflections that I hope are useful for incoming students:

One, you may want your Ph.D. to be perfect, but it won't be, and that is good enough. There will be plenty of follow up work to do as a postdoc or whatever path you may choose. Get it done, do a good job, and move on.

Two, remember to live your life and invest in time with your friends and family – don't get lost in the program; it can be intense, so make sure you take time off to recharge and think.

Three, don't sweat (it)! Many of us have/had impostor syndrome, but try not to be intimidated – ask questions, and don't be afraid to reinvent yourself and do something entirely different.

Fourth, pick an advisor who will support you no matter what route you take post-Clark (academic or non-academic), and with whom you have a complementary work style.

Fifth, find your crew. If there is one thing that was critical to successfully navigating a Ph.D. program for me, it was/is the friendships with fellow cohort members or folks from other cohorts; I speak to several of them almost every single day. We bounce ideas off one another, share life updates, and talk about the wild times we live in.

And lastly, tap into the larger CUGS community – there are many of us, and we are usually always willing to share grant proposals, draft papers, ideas, advice, and beers.



Above: The Taiba N'Diaye wind power project, with farmers' fields in the foreground.

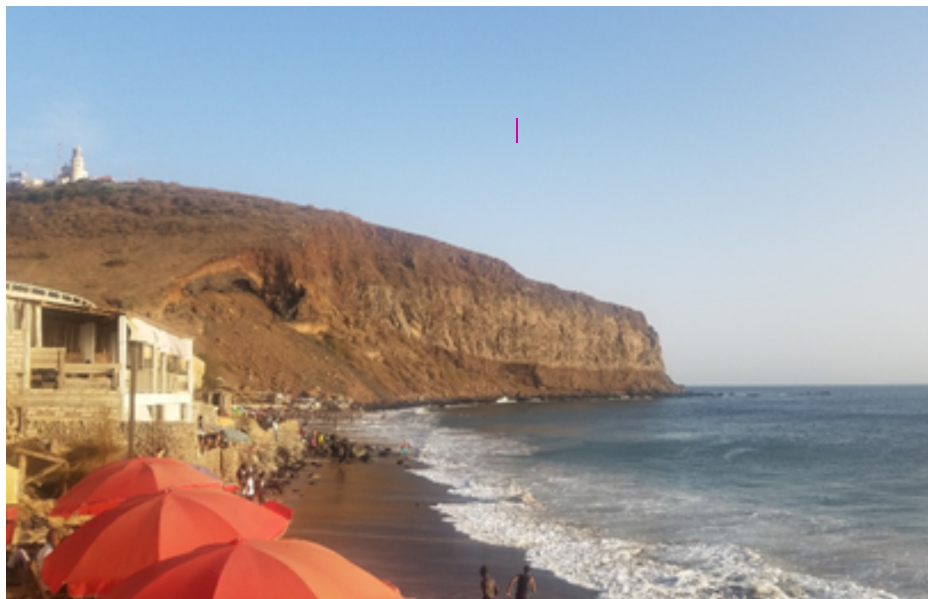


Above: Bougainvillea are everywhere in Senegal.



Above: Modou and an interviewee walking through one of the villages in view of one of the turbines.

Below: One of Dakar's popular hangout spots, "plage des Mamelles." The "phare des Mamelles" is the lighthouse you can see in the top left of corner, which has guided traffic around this westernmost point of the continent since 1864.



Progress to the Ph.D.: Degrees and Milestones in Academic Year 2019 – 2020

Degrees Conferred

Doctoral

Carlos Dobler Morales (August 2019)
David Lukens (August 2019)
Patrick Mutegeki (August 2019)
Ali Santacruz Delgado (August 2019)
Kristen Shake (August 2019)
Ashley York (August 2019)
Catherine Jampel (December 2019)
Melishia Santiago (December 2019)
Laura Sauls (2019)
Bernadette Arakwiye (2020)
Yifan Cai (May 2020)
Dylan Harris (May 2020)
Leslie Gross Wyrzten (May 2020)
Alex Moulton (May 2020)
Scott Odell (August 2020)
Kaner Turker (August 2020)
Son-Ca Lam (May 2020)
Elisa Around (May 2020)
Asadeh Hadizadeh Esfahani (December 2020)
Tong Jiao (December 2020)

M.A. en route to Ph.D.

Roopa Krithivasan (August 2019)
Dan Santos (August 2019)
Su Ye (August 2019)
Mara van den Bold (August 2019)
Yu Zhou (May 2020)

Progress-to-Degree Milestones

Dissertation Defenses

9/25/2019 – Catherine Jampel
10/4/2019 – Melishia Santiago

12/3/2019 – Leslie Gross Wyrzten
12/20/2019 – Yifan Cai
2/7/2020 – Son-Ca Lam
2/24/2020 – Alex Moulton
3/16/2020 – Elisa Arond
4/14/2020 – Kaner Turker
5/5/2020 – Scott Odell
5/15/2020 – Bernadette Arakwiye
6/30/2020 – Tong Jiao

Doctoral Examinations (Orals)

10/18/2019 – Roopa Krithivasan
12/2/2019 – Sarah SanGiovanni
4/27/2020 – Inge Salo
4/30/2020 – Melissa Bollman
5/13/2020 – Mike Athay
5/14/2020 – Lei Song
5/19/2020 – Sam Khallaghi
5/26/2020 – Karen Hudlet Vazquez

Dissertation Proposal Defenses

9/4/2019 – Brittany Wheeler
9/9/2019 – Sarah SanGiovanni
12/5/2019 – Richard Kruger
12/19/2019 – Marc Healy
2/27/2020 – Jaclyn Guz
3/16/2020 – Lei Song
4/17/2020 – Karen Hudlet Vazquez
4/28/2020 – Nathaniel Strosberg
5/7/2020 – Surendra Shrestha
5/13/2020 – Melissa Bollman
5/29/2020 – Luisa Young
6/16/2020 – Nicholas Geron

Snapshots from the year



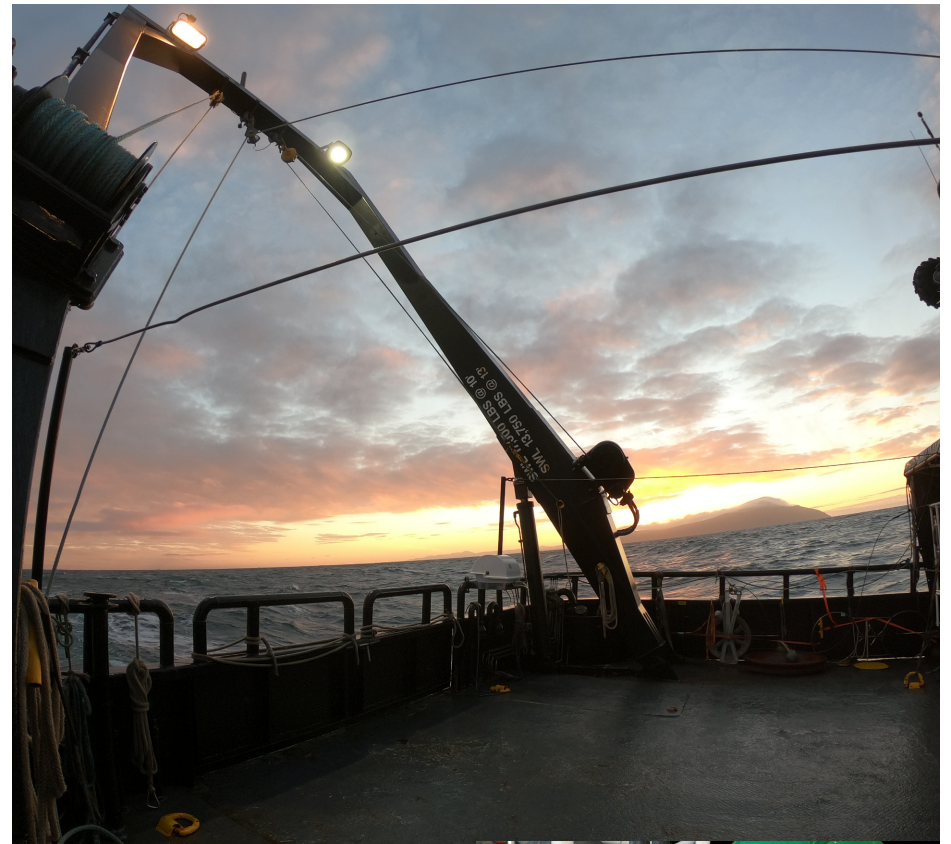
Above: Members of CUGS gather before parting ways for the summer of 2021. Photo courtesy of Mwangi Chege.



Above: The crew and scientists aboard the Research Vessel Norseman II.

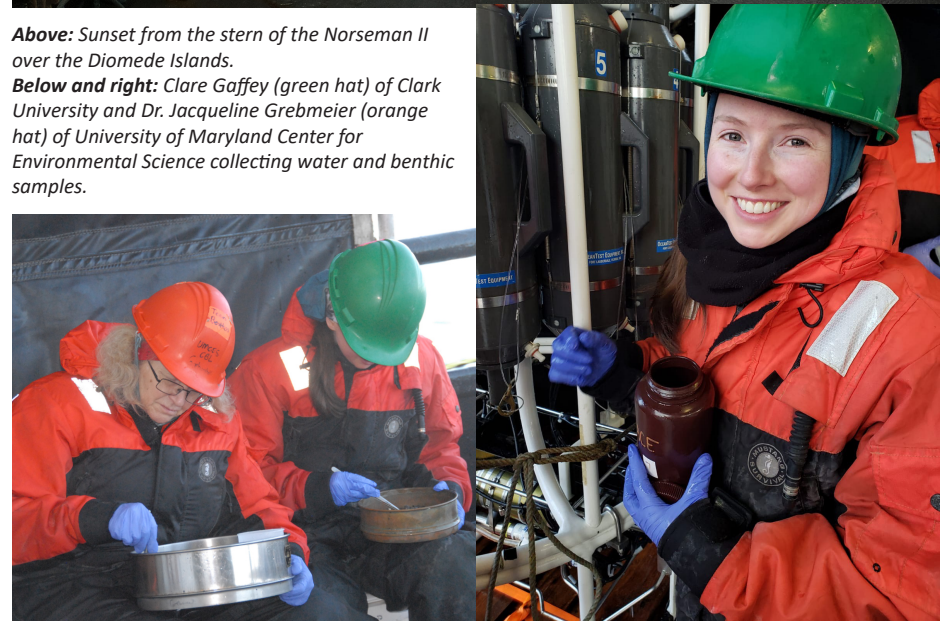
Below: A fellow ship passing in the Bering Sea.

Photos and captions (this page and next) courtesy of Clare Gaffey.



Above: Sunset from the stern of the Norseman II over the Diomed Islands.

Below and right: Clare Gaffey (green hat) of Clark University and Dr. Jacqueline Grebmeier (orange hat) of University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science collecting water and benthic samples.





This page and previous: Although Field Camp in August 2020 was not possible due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, CUGS ventured to Mount Monadnock to keep the traditional annual hike alive. Photos of the Mount Monadnock hike throughout this issue are courtesy of Mwangi Chege, Pilar Delpino Marimon, Michael Cecil, Arman Bajracharya, Andrea Cabrera Roa, Karen Hudlet Vazquez, and Nicholas Geron.



High vaccination rates in the CUGS community made an indoor Conceptual Potluck possible in May 2021. At time of publication in August 2021, we are all paying close attention to health and safety guidelines from public and university officials and are cautiously optimistic about the upcoming in-person fall semester.

Top left: The potluck entries and prizes up for grabs | **Bottom left and top right:** CUGS and CUGS community members pose, and share conversation over, this year's entries | **Right:** Mike Cecil and Andrea Cabrera Roa show off their awards for Best Concept and Most Delectable Dish, respectively | **Below:** Members of the first-year cohort meet in person for the first time after a year of Zoom calls | Photos courtesy of Mike Athay.







The Monadnock

Editors:

Mike Athay

Arman Bajracharya